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Col. Raymond Thomas, former Joint Task Force-Bravo commander says goodbye to soldiers, airmen and Marines July 11 on Soto Cano Air Base. Photo by Spc. Chuck Wagner

Thomas says goodbye to Soto Cano troops

By Spc. Chuck Wagner
Editor

A few days before the official change of command ceremony ushering in Joint Task Force-Bravo's new leader, out-going commander Col. Raymond Thomas said goodbye to Soto Cano Air Base troops.

Gathering soldiers, airmen, and Marines under an aircraft hangar, Thomas spoke informally to them July 11 about their mission and their accomplishments.

"Your impact here is extraordinary," he said, taking off his beret and extending his arms.

"You are the only forward deployed forces in Central and South America."

Thomas said some decision-makers in Washington may believe there are "bigger fish to fry," but are overlooking the importance of Central and South America's friendships with the United States. The United States has had a "loose" policy on the region for nearly 200 years, but is re-

considering those relationships in this age of terrorism.

Honduras, he reminded the troops, does not have a lack of historical perspective, and the U.S.'s humanitarian help could improve relations close to home.

"Drugs, poverty - I think you can be a big help here," Thomas said, slowly nodding his head as he stood within a semi-circle of uniforms. "I think you'll see more and more missions come your way."

Although duty on Soto Cano is, and should be, enjoyable, Thomas asked the troops to stay dedicated to the effort.

"Keep your powder dry and stay focused," Thomas said. "Take care of each other."

"Just because no one is shooting at us in Honduras, we are still in combat right

now," he said.

"There are people everywhere who consider you the enemy because of the uniform you wear," he said tugging at his shirt.

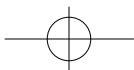
He asked the troops to set the right example as guests in Honduras.

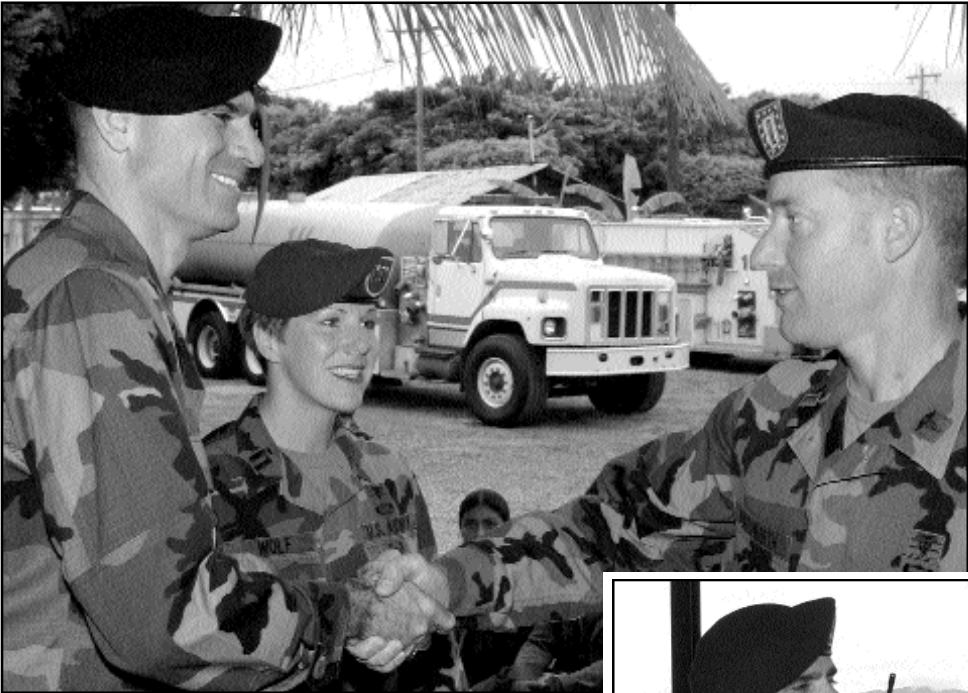
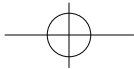
"Thanks for everything you are doing. Continue your great effort," he concluded.

Thomas will be J-3 Director of Operations at Special Operations Command, Fort Bragg, N.C.

Change of command ceremonies

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1st Lt. Wade Swatsworth, left, greets Lt. Col. James Polo during the reception.

MEDEL welcomes Polo as new commander

By Spc. Chuck Wagner
Editor

Joint Task Force-Bravo Commander Col. Raymond Thomas told Lt. Col. James Polo he arrives on base with “high expectations” as new commander of one of the military’s most dynamic units.

“If you give it the leadership it deserves, it will never fail you,” Thomas also told Polo.

Soto Cano Air Base’s medical element ceremoniously changed commanders in one of the base hangars July 11.

Polo told MEDEL troops he “looks forward to what we can achieve together.”

Lt. Col. Richard Hilburn said goodbye to the unit with a boisterous, “you’re awesome.”

“You are one of the best diplomatic instruments we have,” Hilburn told the medical team, which is responsible for much of the task force’s highly visible humanitarian missions.

Polo comes from Ft. Carson, Colo., where he served as deputy commander for clinical services at Evans Army Community Hospital. He previously served as commander of the 84th Medical Detachment at Fort Carson, and the 85th Medical Detachment in support of SFOR 5 in Bosnia.

Hilburn is going to the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Washington D.C.



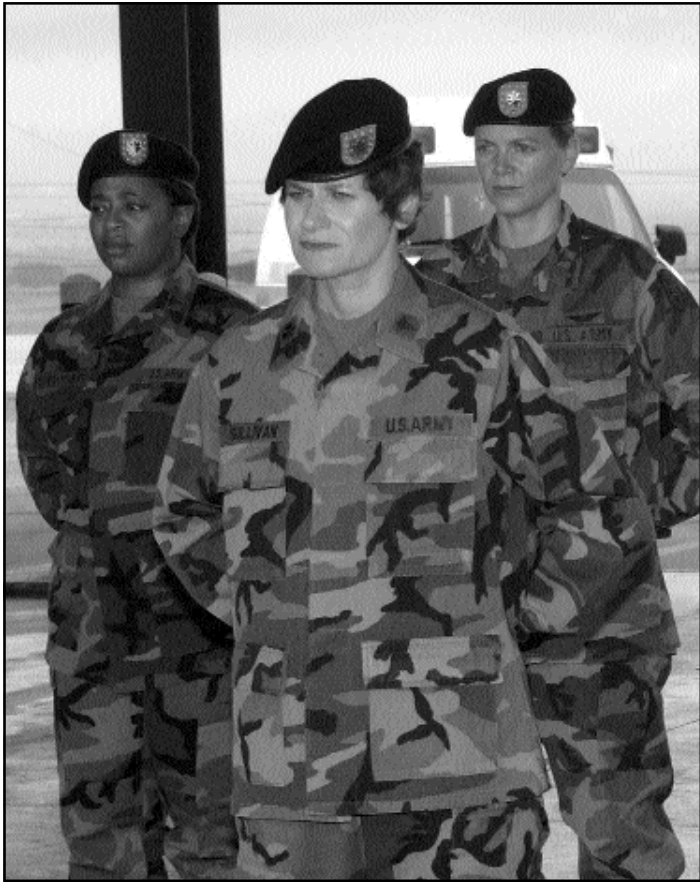
Photos by Spc. Chuck Wagner



Lt. Col. Polo accepts the Medical Element’s guidon from Col. Raymond Thomas, former Joint Task Force-Bravo commander. Below, Lt. Col. Theresa Sullivan stands in front of a command formation during the ceremony.



Above, Lt. Col. Richard Hilburn says goodbye to friends and colleagues after the change of command ceremony. Left, 1st Sgt. Alvin Holman returns the guidon back to the color guard’s Sgt. Brian Sheridan.



The IGUANA

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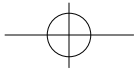
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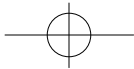
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July 25, 2003

NEWS

THE IGUANA 3

Richardson takes over Winged Warriors

Right, the 1-228th Aviation Regiment salutes the out-going and in-coming commanders.



The color guard was the center of attention during the American and Honduran national anthems.

By Spc. Chuck Wagner
Editor

The winged warriors welcomed a new leader during a change of command ceremony July 9 in a hangar near Soto Cano Air Base's flightline.

Lt. Col. Mark Richardson accepted the 1-228th Aviation Regiment's guidon from Maj. Gen. Alfred Valenzuela, who called the battalion "the best in the Army."

Former commander Lt. Col. Peri Anest offered many thanks, especially to Joint Task Force-Bravo Commander Col. Raymond Thomas and Valenzuela for "allowing me to command.

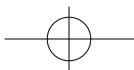
Anest snapped to attention and lifted his arm, "1st Battalion, 228, I salute you."

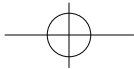
Richardson welcomed the chance to work with the winged warriors, saying "I will do my utmost to lead it through the challenges that lie ahead."

Richardson's last assignment was with Headquarters, Department of the Army, in the Aviation Division of the Army G-8's Force Development Directorate. He previously commanded the B/5-158 Aviation in Aviano, Italy, then served as the S-3 of 3-158th Aviation and later the 12th Aviation Brigade, both in Giebelstadt, Germany. Anest goes to Fort Benning, Ga..



Above, Lt. Col. Mark Richardson accepts the battalion guidon during the ceremony. Left, Lt. Col. Peri Anest receives goodbye wishes from Sgt. 1st Class Robin DiCarlo.





Col. Raymond Thomas receives farewell wishes from ARFOR Sgt. 1st Class Pablo Castro, left, and Joint Task Force-Bravo Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Trombley.

Photo by Martin Chahin

Task force passes to



Col. William Phelps accepts the Joint Task Force-Bravo guidon, U.S. Southern Command, during the ceremony.

Thomas moves onto Fort Bragg

By 1st Lt. Rob Goza
Public Affairs Director

Col. William Phelps took command of Joint Task Force-Bravo during a ceremony in Hangar R-550, where Col. Raymond Thomas handed over the guidon to symbolize relinquishing command of the task force, July 14.

Thomas took the opportunity to publicly praise the men and women of JTF-Bravo for their professionalism and dedication, including both uniformed service members and Honduran civilians.

“The tremendous Honduran civilians represent the institutional memory and experience of our organization, and are an integral part of all of our successes,” Thomas said.

Thomas then addressed the military members of JTF-Bravo.

“I’m extremely proud of your service to your nation and your extraordinary performance, and I look forward to serving

with all of you in the

Maj. Gen. Robert batant commander of mand, described Thomas and, on behalf men and Marines of J lated Thomas on a jo

“Every team has good teams have real we have here is a re really good leader Thomas and JTF-Br

Bishop went on to Bravo remains brigh

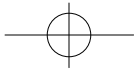
“To this importan you, we want to mak leader equally as ge Your new commande no stranger to this bus answers that call,” B

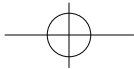
In welcoming Ph confident that with y JTF-Bravo will co reach even greater he



The ceremony color guard had representatives from each service and the Honduran Air Force academy. Below, Honduran military officials salute the flags during the Honduran and U.S. anthems.

Photos by Spc. Chuck Wagner





guidon helps



Photo by Spc. Chuck Wagner
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Phelps arrives from Joint Readiness Training Center, Fort Polk, La., where he served as senior brigade command and control observer/controller.
A graduate of the Command and General Staff College and the U.S. Army War College, Phelps has previously served as chief, current operations, U.S. Forces Command and as senior military advisor to the 1st Brigade, Saudi Arabia National Guard and as commander of 2nd Battalion, 5th Infantry, 25th Infantry Division (Light).
"I'm honored to be standing here before you today and to serve as your commander in the future. I pledge to take seriously the trust that has been bestowed upon me. I look forward to working with you and accomplishing the very important and meaningful mission we have been charged with," Phelps said.
Thomas goes to serve as J-3 director of operations at Special Operations Command, Fort Bragg, North Carolina.



Photos by Spc. Chuck Wagner

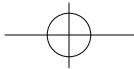


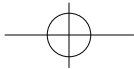
Above, Col. William Phelps and his wife Sally greet Soto Cano personnel in the reception line after the ceremony. Left, ARFOR Pfc. John O'Neil, at left, and Spc. James McBain serve food during the reception.



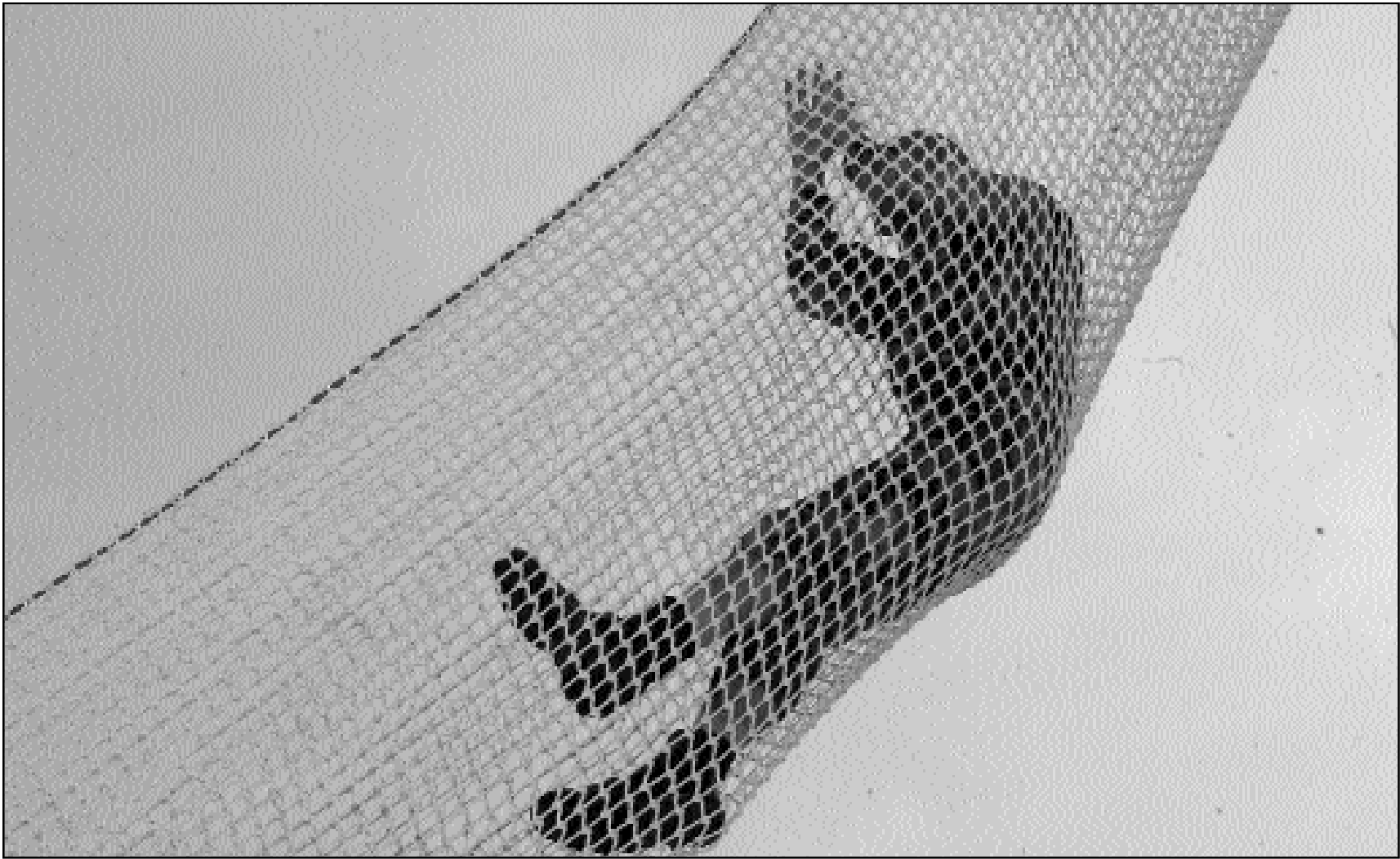
Photos by Martin Chahin

Above, Soto Cano Air Base units salute the in-coming and ou-going commanders.





FEATURE



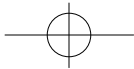
An airman is silhouetted while descending in the Baker chute from atop the flightline tower during training July 18.

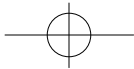


Firefighters Staff Sgt. Kerry Arledge, Staff Sgt. Michael Lumbreras and Senior Airman Jose Lozano prepare the chute as the evacuation training begins. Right, the chute stretched from the tower to the rear of a fire department vehicle.



Senior Airman Commie Hobbs guides evacuees out of the chute while fire chief Senior Master Sgt. Gerrodd Stevenson, watches.





Chute to safety

Tower personnel practice evacuating

By Spc. Chuck Wagner
Editor

The Soto Cano Fire Department extended a helping hand to personnel on the airfield tower who jumped at the opportunity to get down from their perch July 18.

Actually, what firefighters extended was a net chute. The fire department, the tower and base operations cooperated during training to evacuate the tower in case of a tower fire.

The chute – called a Baker's chute – allows personnel to slip in from atop the tower and slide to safety on the flightline below, where the chute is tied to a truck.

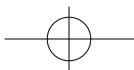
While U.S. and Honduran personnel took turns descending the chute, firefighters ran through the steps of dousing a fire.

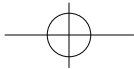
“It went great. I got a lot of positive response from everyone involved,” said Tech. Sgt. Frank Arellano, who evaluated the training. “The co-operation was outstanding, and cooperation is important to the success of what we are doing.”

He said the chute was purchased last year, when they initially tested it. Because of the constant personnel rotation on Soto Cano, they’ve decided to train on the chute at least every six months. The chute normally requires yearly qualification.



Senior Airman Commie Hobbs waits to help AFFOR Capt. Neil Taylor as he finishes his descent from the tower in the chute. Left, several airmen take down the chute. *Photos by Spc. Chuck Wagner*





Mark Smith tries to catch a breeze.



It's a breeze!

Strong winds July 9 encouraged Spcs. Mark Smith and Ian Sheffield, both with the 1-228th Aviation Regiment, to set sail on Soto Cano Air Base's sports field. Smith originally came up with the idea to pair the large kite usually used by windsurfers with a mountain skateboard, constructed with oversized wheels. With a steady wind, the boarder can reach 20 to 25 miles per hour, said Smith.



Mark Smith helps Ian Sheffield stay grounded as a strong wind gust tugs at the kite.



Ian Sheffield skates across Soto Cano's sports field behind the large kite.

Photos by Spc. Chuck Wagner

